



15 November 2013

## **UGPA calls on Government to fast-track review on current rural workforce classification system**

Australia's general practice leaders call on the Government to fast-track the review of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) system and implement the necessary changes to ensure GP incentives are best aligned to community and workforce need.

Since its inception, the ASGC system has received wide-spread criticism from the general practice and the wider health profession, which spurred the preceding Government to commit to a review of the system. The Coalition government has since indicated that it also recognises that the existing system is flawed and that changes are needed.

At a recent United General Practice Australia (UGPA) meeting in Canberra, GP leaders agreed that there is an urgent need to implement a more structured system that will curtail rural and remote communities losing out as a result of the 'one size fits all' approach which is one of the biggest drawbacks of the current system.

The current classification system is not adequately aligned to reflect community and workforce need and has resulted in maldistribution of rural and remote general practice and medical resources and the inefficient use of incentive funding.

Given that the problems with the current remoteness areas (RA) system have been longstanding, and the resulting negative impacts on those communities which have been affected, it is important that this issue be addressed as a matter of urgency.

UGPA recommends that the Government utilise a range of recently proposed models of classification, such as those proposed by Professor John S. Humphreys, et. Al.<sup>1</sup>, as guiding references for reviewing the classification system.

A more structured system that provides stronger discrimination between large and small towns in less remote areas of Australia will allow for greater flexibility for program adaptability, as well as flexibility at the local level.

Australian rural and remote communities are diverse and while there may be overarching similarities in some healthcare needs, UGPA recognises that this diversity warrants appropriate solutions to improve the health of its people.

### **ENDS**

UGPA comprises the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), the Australian Medical Association (AMA), the Australian Medicare Local Alliance (AMLA), the Australian General



Practice Network (AGPN), General Practice Registrars Australia (GPRA), the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), and the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA).

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<sup>1</sup> Humphreys, J. S., McGrail, M. R., Joyce, C. M., Scott, A., Kalb, G. 2012, 'Who should receive recruitment and retention incentives? Improved targeting of rural doctors using medical workforce data', *The Australian Journal of Rural Health*, no. 20, pp. 3–10.